

STATEMENT OF  
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COORDINATION  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING, AND  
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lofgren, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Roger Rufe, Jr., Director of the Office of Operations Coordination at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am pleased to appear today alongside DHS's Chief Intelligence Office, Charlie Allen. Thank you for inviting me to update you and your subcommittee on the status of the Department's Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN).

While I have already had the pleasure of meeting with a few of you, I welcome the opportunity to meet with each of you personally and listen to your thoughts as we begin this important work together on a vision for many successful future endeavors.

I was appointed Director by Secretary Chertoff in July of this year. I am a 34-year career veteran of the United States Coast Guard with experience commanding five Coast Guard cutters in the Pacific and Atlantic regions in addition to being commander for both the Atlantic and Pacific areas. As a result, I know firsthand the importance of skilled operations in coordinating and responding to emergency situations

## **Overview**

As you are aware, HSIN is the primary, secure nationwide network through which DHS receives and shares critical information, including alerts and warnings, with its components and its public- and private-sector partners, including Federal, State, local, and tribal officials and the owners and operators of critical infrastructures. HSIN allows these parties to communicate on suspicious activities, threats, and infrastructure vulnerabilities; prepare for and mitigate natural or manmade disasters; and collaborate on restoration and recovery efforts following a serious incident. This is a system that has the potential to improve vertical and horizontal homeland security information sharing.

DHS agrees with the five recommendations in the DHS Inspector General's June report on the HSIN program. Since this report focuses on interactions with State and local governments, I will restrict my comments to those communities of interest.

From the Office of Operations Coordination perspective, HSIN has not realized its full potential because it lacks many aspects of a typical Federal government program.

As noted in the report, the urgency to roll out HSIN meant that several critical elements of the program—such as a requirements definition, program goals, milestones (metrics), and an evaluation of user needs—were not thoroughly addressed.

Lacking the benefits from a more detailed planning process, HSIN suffered from inadequate program oversight and management. To address this, Operations Coordination is creating an HSIN Program Management Office, headed by an experienced GS-15 to manage all aspects of the program.

But even before the final IG report, DHS had identified several shortcomings and had developed initiatives to aggressively address those shortcomings. As can be seen in our response to the IG's recommendations, we implemented a series of these initiatives to support the long-term success of HSIN. Significant, measurable progress is being made in these areas.

We believe that the IG's report is a catalyst to improve HSIN.

We also believe that input from our Congressional partners, and especially this Subcommittee, will be invaluable in defining the systems and processes for our homeland security. Toward that end, let me reassure you that the Office of Operations Coordination will continue to work closely with Congressional partners; our DHS partners such as Assistant Secretary of Intelligence and Analysis Charlie Allen, Assistant Secretary of Infrastructure Protection Robert Stephan; and other partners to identify areas for improvement. Together we will work to ensure HSIN becomes a better homeland security information sharing tool.

### **Recent HSIN Accomplishments**

In addition to and in conjunction with the IG report recommendations, there are two areas of recent attention that deserve highlighting because they are critical to the success of HSIN: efforts with our users and system enhancements.

#### *Being Responsive to the User Community*

It is always important to listen to the needs of the users. To that end, DHS is moving to establish the Homeland Security Information Network Advisory Committee. This advisory committee will initially include 14 representatives from Federal, State and local governments and the private sector including: homeland security advisors, law enforcement, fire services, public health, emergency managers and the private sector. This group will provide organizationally independent advice and recommendations to me and other DHS leadership on the requirements of the various end users. A notice on the establishment of this advisory committee should be published in *The Federal Register* in early to mid-October.

Under this year's HSIN State Expansion Initiative, the HSIN Team has redoubled its efforts to address the specific technological and training needs of today's and

tomorrow's State user communities. During a typical deployment to a State, the team conducts a series of meetings with the appropriate officials to explain HSIN's tools and capabilities and to develop a State site to meet officials' needs. This year, the team has constructed 24 sites for the States. It is important to note that the HSIN capability is provided at no cost to the State.

As an example, the HSIN Team fulfilled the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' requirement for a cost-efficient and secure system to exchange information. The team worked with the Massachusetts Commonwealth Fusion Center to integrate the Commonwealth's existing tools into the HSIN website.

Since October 2005, the team has completed 10 training sessions in Massachusetts and now HSIN serves over 2,200 users in all counties of the Commonwealth. Users of the Commonwealth's website include: Commonwealth, county and municipality police; the Commonwealth Homeland Security Advisor's Office; Commonwealth emergency management officials; Commonwealth critical infrastructure personnel; Commonwealth fire services personnel; Commonwealth emergency operations center personnel; and others. As we all know, priorities can change and the HSIN Team can easily modify the State site to reflect those changes upon request.

Offering special support to State governments for hurricane preparedness efforts in light of the Hurricane Katrina aftermath, DHS has deployed the HSIN Team to 17 States throughout the Gulf Coast and East Coast. The team provides HSIN training to State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) principals and staff members to ensure they are prepared to utilize the system during emergencies.

More specifically, team members train EOC employees on HSIN's tools, which include geospatial mapping, a search engine which queries the HSIN portal, Request For Information (RFI) and FYI options, and document management functions. In early August 2006, the HSIN Team provided technical support and HSIN Common Operating Picture (COP) training at the Principal Federal Official exercise, conducted at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

In mid-August, the National Operations Center (NOC) and the HSIN Team, in conjunction with the Preparedness Directorate, executed a major information flow exercise. The Hurricane Ennis Information Flow Functional Exercise tested and evaluated the information flow reporting processes during a simulated national incident using HSIN and its COP/Common Operating Database (COD). This successful exercise included participation from the National Infrastructure Coordinating Center (NICC), the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) and the Baton Rouge, LA Joint Field Office (JFO). The chief goal of this exercise was to establish the effectiveness, efficiency and operational value of this systems information sharing processes from all levels of the government. Other goals included identifying any gaps with the existing information sharing procedures and protocols for the NOC and addressing each of the DHS components' core mission competencies. Lessons learned from the "Hurricane Ennis" exercise were documented and many changes deemed critical were implemented prior to

Tropical Storm Ernesto's arrival. The information flow improvements were evident and had positive effects during this real world Tropical Storm.

A functional exercise like this enabled DHS to apply real-time emergency communications in a simulated environment. HSIN's capabilities functioned as they were meant to—and ensure that during crises, each State EOC has the means to communicate and collaborate through site posting, threaded discussion, secure chat conference rooms, or instant messaging with the Joint Field Office (JFO), FEMA's Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), and DHS's National Operations Center (NOC). Also, it is important to note that these capabilities allow for inter and intra-state collaboration during crises.

Just as important as having functional, efficient communications during Federal hurricane response efforts, is having staff that can easily use HSIN. To ensure that, specialized DHS teams have trained personnel in HSIN use at the NRCC, the RRCCs, JFOs, Federal Departments and Agencies with Emergency Support Function (ESF) roles, NORTHCOM, various Federal operations centers including the Department of Energy, the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Guard Bureau and the White House Situation Room.

#### *Better Communicating with the User Community*

In an effort to better communicate with the State user community, we have taken a number of steps including holding educational conferences and updating reference materials. For example, we held a User's Working Group meeting in February 2006 at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency facility in Harrisburg. This two-day meeting was attended by multiple representatives from the initial eight pilot States.

We are also scheduled to brief and demonstrate HSIN at the *Fusing the Fusion Centers* conferences in September and October. The conferences will be held on a regional basis, ensuring that officials from the same regions meet, network, and discuss issues impacting their area. Input and recommendations received at the conferences will be compiled and shared with fusion center leaders and related Federal agencies.

To further augment support materials available on the website, the HSIN Team has updated the HSIN frequently asked questions document, the fact sheet detailing the most recent changes in the program, and is publishing monthly bulletins. These bulletins contain up-to-date information on program activities and articles describing how HSIN is being used to support day-to-day and special operations. These and other materials will help ensure that users better understand the HSIN mission and have the most current materials at their fingertips.

In addition to the conferences, three meetings have been held with HSIN State and local community representatives and HSIN briefings have been provided to the Major Cities Chiefs, the International Association of Police Chiefs, and the National Sheriffs' Association.

## *Upgrading the System*

HSIN is currently introducing a series of infrastructure upgrades that will improve the system's speed, reliability and capability. These upgrades will increase user capacity and operational ease as well as the system's responsiveness. For example, the user interface has been improved to permit single sign on to all communities of interest on all national and state websites. All communities of interest sites have been given a common look and feel, and the nomination and validation of new users have been simplified and made expedient. Additionally, to ensure system availability, DHS has implemented a survivable infrastructure, using two geographically dispersed systems. Hopefully this configuration change will be fully implemented by first quarter FY 07.

The newest capability on HSIN is the National Operations Center's Common Operating Picture (COP). Eventually, the COP will provide all HSIN users nationwide with the capability to view and share critical information from a common operating database for crises and significant events. This means that officials in various parts of the Federal government and across the country can share situational understanding and make informed decisions on such topics as asset deployment and evacuation, in addition to just monitoring a situation.

The COP development is an incremental build that was initially focused on this hurricane season. Thus, current access to the COP has been prioritized at the Federal level while ongoing training efforts have reached into FEMA's Regional Response Coordination Centers and the Joint Field Office in Louisiana. The intent is to provide COP access and training to all partners at the Federal, State, local, tribal, and private sector nationwide. HSIN/COP was recently fully accredited--meaning adequate security controls are in place.

Though these upgrades are vital, the underpinning for system improvement is the hiring of a HSIN Program Manager. As related in our response to the IG report and earlier here, the importance of the programmatic responsibility of HSIN will be elevated. The Program Manager, working with end users, will ensure that performance metrics are established and instituted. The Program Manager will engage all HSIN stakeholder groups to assess deficiencies in training materials and SOPs and ensure that adequate training materials and support are available to optimize the effective operation of this system. This person will ensure that HSIN development becomes a fully collaborative process among other Federal, State, local and tribal partners and is consistent with the Information Sharing Environment required by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act. The efforts of the HSIN Program Manager will include:

- Aligning DHS and National Operation Center (NOC) missions
- Coordinating the approach to Federal, State, and local stakeholders and partners centering on increased engagement
- Providing stakeholder-specific SOPs, CONOPs and educational information to HSIN users

- Coordinating the HSIN Advisory Committee to obtain increased stakeholder advice
- Using earned value management (EVM) measurements to determine the effectiveness and use of HSIN information sharing and collaboration.
- Having daily interaction with other DHS and Federal agencies to share leads to ensure the unified delivery and exchange of information among our partners.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, be assured that DHS is committed to ensuring that all viable recommendations on system improvement are elevated and acted upon and that the needs of the end user are met. We will continue to work together with all partners to ensure we have the best system possible.

The IG's report has been helpful in identifying areas of needed improvement and, as noted earlier, efforts are underway to address the issues raised.

I would hope that you continue to have a desire to learn more about HSIN and DHS's other information sharing efforts. If your time allows, we would enjoy the opportunity to host a visit by this Subcommittee and staff to the NOC to learn more about HSIN in a "hands on" manner.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering your questions.